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"Shall we know each other there?"

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"Absent from the body, . . . present with the Lord."  
(2 Cor. v. 8.)

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W. L. Magee.

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With Him everlasting ages,  
Reigning with Him on His throne,  
Singing forth our endless praises,  
For the love which He has shown :  
Here we praise His matchless grace,  
There we'll see Him face to face.

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Ottawa :  
J. DURIE & SON.  
1882.

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## **"Shall we know each other there?"**

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How often does the question, "Shall we know each other there?" arise in sorrowing hearts as memory, bidden or unbidden, brings back loved ones laid away in the silent grave; and as we feel our inability to give any comforting assurance in reply to that question, how prone we are to let repining and impatient thoughts arise in our hearts, till faith, "the gift of God," whispers peace be still, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

It is not intended in this paper to enter into the consideration of where heaven is, or what it is, neither is it purposed to refer to the state or place of the *wicked* dead now or hereafter, further than may be necessary in considering the subject of this paper; but rather to ascertain from Scripture whether there are any grounds on which God's bereaved people can look forward with the hope of again seeing and knowing their dead who have died in the Lord, but whose bodies now mingle with the clods of the valley; and in undertaking this it is felt that writers with attainments to which the author of this paper would not presume to aspire, have freely used their talents in writing on the future state and collateral truths. Nevertheless the writer cannot allow himself to be deterred from a feeble effort to glean after great reapers, in humble hope that a few ears of grain may be gathered and thrashed out to the comfort of some bereaved heart, and in the expectation that this little work may

find its way to where works on kindred subjects, but of greater merit and research, have not reached; and while conscious of the danger which besets one, of getting beyond what Scripture warrants in writing on the future state, the author has set himself the task of strictly adhering to the Scriptures and sober deductions therefrom. But while all this may be true, it is recognized that if God has given a revelation, God's people have a right to what it reveals; it is their birth-right; their Father has given it to them, and they come short of their privileges if they neglect what it discovers. When we have God's word for our warrant we are on a firm substantial footing, outside of the realms of fancy.

In pursuing this enquiry it will be necessary to do so in relation to the separate or disembodied state, for it is the state to which the thoughts of the larger portion of God's people are drawn; as well as the perfect state, when with bodies of glory and power, they who "sleep in Jesus" shall rise from their graves at the coming of Christ. "Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming," 1 Cor. xv. 23. This being so, the first point which demands our consideration is the state immediately after death.

It will need no argument to convince children of God that when they die they go to the Lord, and are consciously in His presence. This is plainly taught in the Word of God. The Lord in answer to the touching appeal of the penitent thief said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." The response was not that the thief would be with Him at the resurrection. No; it was a present thing—"To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." The Apostle

Paul had a "desire to depart and to be with Christ," for he knew that "to be absent from the body" was "to be present with the Lord."

How consoling then the knowledge that the absent ones are with Jesus, safe in His arms. The stormy passage of life, its winds, its waves, its cares and crosses, exchanged for the haven of rest, of light and glory. Dear Reader, would you call back the dove which spread its wings and left the dove-cot for the realms of light and joy? Would you bring it back to the storm and tempest, the rough road and sandy desert? No; and if you would it would not return, for it has folded its pinions and is at rest with Jesus who redeemed it. "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." If a child in glory is a child for ever; then

"The lily is as perfect as the oak,  
The myrtle is as fragrant as the palm,  
And Sharon's roses are as beautiful  
As Lebanon's majestic cedar crown." \*

In the case of the penitent thief and the statement of the Apostle how striking is the preservation of individuality. "This day shalt *thou* be with *me*." If Paul is present in the body, dwelling in it as in a house, —*he* is absent from the Lord, but if absent from the body *he* is present with the Lord. And these statements cannot be limited to a mere expression of safe-keeping, in view of the future resurrection state, but we may safely assure ourselves that nothing less than conscious existence of the individual with Christ is taught.

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\* Bickersteth's "Yesterday, To-day, and Forever."



"They err, who tell us that the spirit unclothed,  
And from its mortal tabernacle loosed,  
Has neither lineament of countenance,  
Nor limit of ethereal mould or form of spiritual substance," \*

And this is confirmed by Scripture, for Samuel's disembodied spirit appeared, was recognized, and spake to Saul. 1 Sam. 28. 14. Further confirmation is also found in Luke 9. 28-36. Where the three Apostles saw and knew Moses speaking with our Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration; and it is but a sober deduction from this and the Lord's peace giving promise to the thief on the cross, that not only was he with the Lord but that he saw Him and knew Him; for would it not fall far short of the full comfort which our Lord's words were calculated to give the dying thief, if he was not with Him, to see Him, and to know Him? To be with Him and not know it; to be with Him and not see Him would be inadequate to the Lord's promise.

This is not all by any means which Scripture has to say on the subject and lest it be objected by some doubting heart, that the Scriptures which refer to the recognition of Samuel and Moses, do but prove that disembodied spirits were seen and recognized by men in the flesh, but leave untouched the question whether spirits can recognize each other before being "clothed upon with our house which is from heaven," we will enter upon a further consideration of the subject.

In the narrative of the rich man and Lazarus, in the 16th of Luke, which some think is a parable, but which appears rather to be a statement of events which had already transpired, we have the Lord drawing aside the curtain and giving a glimpse of the

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\* Bickersteth's "Yesterday, To-day, and Forever."

place and state of the dead both saved and unsaved up to the time at which he was speaking; and here it will be necessary to make a digression.

Previous to our Lord's death all God's people who died went down into Hades, in which was a place for each of the two great classes—saved and unsaved—separated by a gulf beyond which none could pass; but as Hades is not that place of felicity and glory into which the Old Testament saints were led after the death of Christ, neither is it the lake of fire into which the godless will be cast after the judgment of the great white throne revealed in the 20th of Revelation. While the vail was unrent in the Tabernacle or Temple no man save only the High Priest could enter into the holy place within the vail. Until redemption was accomplished man was excluded from God's presence, the unrent vail shut him out, but when redemption was accomplished, when the work was finished and that Blessed One yielded up the ghost, the vail of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom (mark the order: from the *top* to the *bottom*; from heaven downward; had it been rent by man it would have been from the bottom upward) the new and living way into the holy place, into God's presence, was opened through which Paul exhorts the brethren to enter and to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. "Having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. Heb. x. 19-22.

Hades (not Hell) to which our Lord descended is referred to in Zachariah as "the pit." "As for thee also by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." Zach. ix. 11. When Christ died He descended into the place of departed spirits, and despoiled Satan of the keys of death and Hades, and swept triumphantly through the prison gates with His redeemed people, and the way into the Holiest being opened up by His death, Christ's people go no more to Hades, but direct to the Lord Himself. Hence Paul's comforting statement, that when "absent from the body" we are "present with the Lord."

We know full well from Scripture, that Christ is not now in Hades, and we know also, on the same sure and certain authority, that for one of Christ's people to die now is to go to where He is and be with Him, and can it be doubted that Christ has His Old Testament Saints also with Him?—"The spirits of just men made perfect." Imperfect in their condition before, but now consequent upon accomplished redemption made perfect. Christ holds the keys of death and Hades and when He despoiled Satan it was not, we may rest assured, to turn the key of Hades again upon His Old Testament people, but to lead out a multitude of captives.

Until the death of Christ, Satan had the power of death (Goliath of Gath held the sword) but we see from Heb. ii. 14, that Christ died, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil," (Goliath's weapon was taken from him,) and the despoiling of Satan is referred to by the Lord in the 11th of Luke, where He



says, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace his goods are in peace, but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusteth and divideth his spoils;" and again, in Isaiah liii. 12, we have, "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death." "Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in Himself,—Col. ii. 15; and we find in Ephesians iv. 8-9, "When He ascended up on high, he led a multitude of captives.... Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth." In the garden of Eden the devil obtained dominion over man, and held their spirits in ward in Hades; but the Lord of Glory left His bright abode, He who was rich became poor and took part of flesh and blood in order to die, that he might wrest from Satan the keys of death and Hades and deliver from his power the Old Testament Saints who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage. Are Christ's people now subject to bondage through fear of death? "Having a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better," does not sound like the utterance of one in bondage through fear of death. The triumphant challenge "O! Death, where is thy sting? O! Grave, where is thy victory?" Would not lead one to suppose that the utterer was in bondage through fear of death. No, dear reader, the spirits of the Lord's saved ones go direct to Himself (Hades is no longer for them) into His presence, present with Himself. It is blessed to know that the Old Testament Saints were comforted in

Hades. There was no torment for them for we read, "I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall when I cast him down to hell (scheol,) with them that descend into the pit and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth," Eze. xxxi. 16. Abraham and Lazarus had drunk water before they went down into the pit wherein is no water. The rich man drank not of the water of life before going into the pit. Hence that agonized prayer for a drop of the water of life. One drop would have been sufficient, but there was no water there. He could have drunk to the full and to spare in his life-time; *not a drop now*. The Lord's people were comforted and at rest no doubt in Hades, but what a great change must have taken place in their condition when redemption was accomplished and the Lord brought them forth from the pit, (which strong as it was could not shut its mouth on Him and if not on Him no longer on the purchase of His blood) brought His redeemed people out from under the hand of the greater Pharaoh.

"All scripture which bear upon our Lord's going down to Hades, such as Ps. xvi. 9-11. Eph. iv. 9. 1 Peter iii. 18-19, represent it as an unprecedented act of redeeming love and condescension. Nor are there wanting intimations in the word of God, that the accomplishment of Christ's work on earth, was a mighty promotion in the bliss of those who had already fallen asleep in Him. Then, and not till then, are they called "the spirits of just men made perfect." ("Yesterday, To-day, and Forever." Notes on line 914 of book 7, page 420.) And the same authority quotes Alford on Heb. xi. 40, who comparing that verse with the 23rd

verse of the 12th chapter of the same epistle says, "The writer seems to testify that the advent and work of Christ have changed the estate of the Old Testament fathers and saints into greater and perfect bliss, an inference which is forced on us by many other passages in Scripture."

I have been led to make this divergence, as much confusion appears to exist relative to the state or place of departed spirits. Scripture when rightly divided ever shows a beautiful accord.

To return to the narrative of the rich man and Lazarus in the 16th of Luke; we find in this Scripture a statement so plain, so simple, so conclusive of departed spirits recognizing each other, that it is of itself sufficient assurance that we shall know each other there; that is in the separate state when the spirit is separate from the body, and if this is so as regards the spirit separate from the body, how much more can we confidently hope we shall know each other when we are "clothed upon with our house which is from heaven," 2 Cor. v. 2. "And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, the rich man also died and was buried and in hell (Hades) he lifted up his eyes being in torments and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham have mercy on me and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue for I am tormented in this flame." But Abraham could not comply with his request for there was a great gulf fixed, over which neither could pass to the other. The rich man then asked that Lazarus be sent to his five brethren to testify to them "lest they also come into

this place of torment" and "Abraham saith unto him they have Moses and the Prophets let them hear them." So it ever was and is, man would have a way of salvation different from God's. God's way was to hear "Moses and the Prophets;" the rich man's was "if one went unto them from the dead they will repent." And men are yet choosing their own way, they will not submit to God's way—the cross of Christ. Refusing to come unto the fountain of living waters, they hew out for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water, indifferent to the awful fact that they are going down into the "pit wherein is no water." Men are not saved by seeing or hearing spirits. They are saved by *hearing and believing* God's Word.—Rom. x. 17.

We have then in this narrative in Luke, conscious existence, identity, remembrance, recognition, and interchange of communications in the disembodied state, conveying the most positive assurance to us that should the Lord tarry and we fall asleep, we shall join our loved ones, who went before; shall see and know them, holding holy converse, waiting with them and all the blessed dead, the resurrection morn and Bridal of the Lamb.

If then the disembodied state is one of such blessedness and felicity in the Lord's presence, how incomparably greater will be the joy of the resurrection, when with bodies of beauty and glory, "fashioned like unto His glorious body," we shall give glory to God, Christ in our midst, Himself leading His Church in songs of adoration.

We have seen then from Scripture that we will enjoy the blessedness of knowing each other in that

state which intervenes death and resurrection, and it only remains to ascertain whether we shall know each other in our risen bodies, in our fixed eternal estate, and it need scarcely be urged, that if we know each other in the separate condition, with what certainty we can look forward to recognition when spirit and body are again united, for if identity is not lost when the spirit is separated from the body, we may assure ourselves that identity will not be wanting when body and spirit are again joined together. Scripture however does not leave us to conjecture on this point.

In the scene on the Holy Mount, where Peter, James and John were eye witnesses of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we find, *Moses* and *Elijah* talking with Jesus, Moses who had passed into the disembodied state, and Elijah who was translated without seeing death. The former the type of that portion of God's people who have fallen asleep in Jesus; the latter the type of that portion of God's people who will be alive at the coming of the Lord, and who like Elijah shall be translated, caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Hence it is unscriptural to state that, "It is appointed unto *all* men once to die," for scripture nowhere asserts it, but it is indeed expressly negatived by St. Paul, in the 4th chapter of 1st Thessalonians, and again, if there could be a stronger negation, in 1st Corinthians xv. 51, where he expressly states that "we shall not all sleep."

In this blessed scene on the mount, we find, if Moses was known, so also was Elijah. But further, we read, that at Christ's death the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of their graves after His resurrec-



tion and went into the Holy City and appeared unto many.

We have, however, in the resurrection of our adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and subsequent events between His resurrection and ascension, the fullest testimony to the precious truth that God's risen saints shall know each other. The Lord was seen and known by many of His people. Paul states in 1st Cor. xv. "that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve, and after that He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once," and not only was He seen by His disciples but He spake to them, and they to Him, and even Thomas who was slow to believe that the Lord was risen, exclaimed when he saw Jesus, "My Lord and my God." Our Lord when He stood in the midst of His disciples, said, "behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself, handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bone as ye see me have." The Lord's risen body which could be seen and felt, was capable of receiving food, for He did eat before them, and though visible and invisible at will, was visible and material, "flesh and bone," as He Himself declares. Mark, the Lord did not say *flesh* and *blood*, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." In the blood the vital principle dwells. The life of all flesh is in the blood thereof, but at death we leave our present tabernacle behind, and our resurrection or translated bodies will be instinct, not with *blood*, but with *spirit*, not transformed into spirit, but palpable bodies—refined and subtile indeed—instinct with spirit—a spiritual body.

And John in his 1st Epistle and 3rd Chapter assures us that when Christ shall appear we shall be like

Him. Like Jesus! Like Him whose glory shut out the light from Saul's eyes—as breathing out slaughter against the Lord's disciples he journeyed to Damascus—and brought him a trembling penitent to the feet of Him, whose people he so cruelly persecuted! Like Jesus! Whose glory smote the lonely seer at Patmos prone to the earth; whose eyes were as a flame of fire; whose feet were like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace, and whose countenance was as the sun shining in its strength! Even so, for He “shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.” Phil. iii. 21. “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” 1 John iii. 2. We might the Psalmist exclaim, “I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness.”

Let not God's people then sorrow, over their blessed dead, as others who have no hope; but look forward with calmness and full assurance to that joyful hour when in our glorified bodies, with friends and loved ones again surrounding us, we will unite in hymns of adoration unto Him who loveth us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

In the 7th of Luke we have the blessed Lord speaking in tones of tenderest compassion to a bereaved one, saying to her, “Weep not.” Would that all God's people could hear and obey the Master's voice—as they bury their dead out of their sight—saying, “Weep not.” Has the Lord forgotten how to be gracious? Do not *all things* work together *for good* to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose? Does not

the Lord see the end from the beginning? Does He not know His own purpose? He did in the case of the Widow of Nain, and hence the consoling words, "Weep not." This sorrowing woman whom the Lord met coming out of Nain (Pleasant) had already been bereft of her support, for she was a widow, and now carrying out her only son to the grave—her only comfort gone—she is met by Him who alone can comfort, who "had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not;" and then after comforting her—delaying to raise to life till she became the recipient of His divine compassion—"He came and touched the bier, . . . . and He said, young man, I say unto thee, arise. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother." Blessed scene! death and sorrow fleeing away from the presence of Him who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many, and who ministers yet to His members on the earth out of all His fulness through the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. This is the day of *compassion* and "Weep not." To-morrow He will deliver our loved ones to us. "For the Lord Himself shall descend." Mark, the Lord *Himself*, not an angel, not Michael, Heaven's Archangelic Prince, but the Lord Himself shall descend, shall come onward to this earth, the City of Nain, (called pleasant place by many—sad misnomer that to a bereaved one whose cup is full), and having raised His sleeping saints and translated His living ones, having changed our vile bodies that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, He will restore our loved ones to us and us to them. 1 Thess. iv. 13-18. "Weep not." But "Comfort one another with these words."

And here I venture to repeat what has already been stated, that it is only proposed to consider the state of those who die in the Lord, and I may add that while such is the object, it is with no desire to conceal that there is an awful reverse, to what we have been considering, awaiting those who die without Christ. And although space and time forbid, the writer cannot forbear from entreating any one who has not drunk of the living water, to hasten for his soul's sake and delay no longer, but now, as these pages are read, to take the water of life, which Christ is offering so freely, that he may never thirst; lest he go down into the pit in which is no water and thirst there; and let not such an one be delayed by the enemy of his soul, who like a lion is seeking to devour him—persuading him to put the time off till he is fitter to come; but come now, just as he is, in all his sins, for Christ died to save *sinner*s:—

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 “God in mercy sent His Son  
 To a world by sin undone;  
 Jesus Christ was crucified,  
 ’Twas for sinners Jesus died.”

Delay no longer, then, as you value your eternal welfare. “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men.” 2 Cor. v. 11. Hesitate not to cast yourself upon God’s love, God’s grace, a crucified and risen Christ, for “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Romans x. 8-9.

In earnest and humble hope that He who “hath

done all things well," may use what has been written to the comfort of sorrowing hearts surrounded by dead and dying, the writer casts his bread upon the waters in simple reliance on the promise, "thou shalt find it after many days."

